(b) whether it is also a fact that they are insisting on production of Bank Guarantee instead of Letter of Guarantee as per the provisions of the Drug and Cosmetics Act;

(c) if so, how many imports have been delayed due to such harassment; and

(d) the steps being taken to bring such officials to book and action initiated against them?

THE MINSITER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) The port and Air Port Offices of CDSCO at Customs are supervised by Asstt. Drugs Controller/Technical Officers. There are no cases reported about harassment of any importer from these offices.

(b) Bank Guarantee is not required under the provisions of the Drugs & Cosmetics Act and Rules thereunder. As per information made available by all the Port Officers of Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO). There has been no instance of insisting on Bank Guarantee.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Irregularities in purchase of drugs

358. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item "Central Body doctored drugs purchase norm" which appeared in the Times of India, dated 28th January, 2002;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) the steps taken to identify the reasons for such large scale irregularities in the purchase of drugs and to fix responsibility therefor;

(d) the measures taken/proposed to be taken to punish the guilty; and

(e) how Government propose to compensate the victims of sub-standard drugs purchased from unregistered, unqualified and black-listed firms and supplied to CGHS beneficiaries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (e) The procedure for registration of firms is governed by the Medical Store's Manual and the orders issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Drugs from unregistered firms are not purchased except that during emergencies like flood, drought, earthquake, cyclone etc. Drugs may be purchased from unregistered firms to meet urgent requirement with the permission of the competent authority. Further, drug samples are picked up at random, coded and sent to two different laboratories for testing. There has been occasional departures from the procedure due to unavoidable circumstances like utilization of budget allocation near the end of the year, compliance with urgent indents etc. Any complaint with regard to the irregularities in procedures in the procurement of drugs through Medical Stores is immediately got enquired into and where necessary, through CBI, to fix responsibility on the officials concerned and departmental proceedings are initiated. If any case of supply of sub-standard drugs comes to notice, immediate action is taken to return the available stock to the supplier firm to get replacements. No specific case/demand seeking compensation from any CGHS beneficiary for sub-standard drugs has been received.

Credit facilities for treatment of CGHS

359. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently decided to introduce credit facilities for treatment of C.G.H.S. employees in private hospitals;

(b) if so, the details thereof and list of private hospitals included for the purpose;

(c) whether the beneficiaries include freedom fighters, pensioners, former M.Ps, besides the in-service officers;

(d) whether under the revised scheme, the beneficiaries will be entitled to go to the private hospitals for treatment directly without being referred by the respective dispensary which is not practicable in emergencies; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?